

# Texas Education Research Center

*May 2020*



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**The University of Texas at Austin  
Office of Internal Audits  
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**OFFICE OF INTERNAL AUDITS**  
**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN**

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May 5, 2020

President Gregory L. Fenves  
The University of Texas at Austin  
Office of the President  
P.O. Box T  
Austin, Texas 78713

Dear President Fenves,

We have completed our audit of the Texas Education Research Center (Texas ERC). The objective of the audit was to determine whether the Texas ERC is in compliance with the State of Texas Interagency Cooperation Contract (Contract) between The University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). The report is attached for your review.

Overall, the Texas ERC complies with the Contract terms, and there were no reportable issues.

Please let me know if you have questions or comments regarding this audit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sandy Jansen".

Sandy Jansen, CIA, CCSA, CRMA  
Chief Audit Executive

cc: Dr. Celeste Alexander, Director, Texas Education Research Center  
Dr. Dan Jaffe, Interim Executive Vice President and Provost  
Mr. Carlos Martinez, Chief of Staff, Office of the President  
Dr. Charles Martinez, Jr., Dean, College of Education  
Dr. Pedro Reyes, Executive Director, Texas Education Research Center  
Dr. Victor Saenz, Department Chair, Educational Leadership and Policy



# Executive Summary

## Texas Education Research Center

Project Area

Project Number: 19.306

### Audit Objective

The objective of this audit was to determine whether the Texas Education Research Center (Texas ERC) is in compliance with the State of Texas Interagency Cooperation Contract (Contract) between The University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB).

### Conclusion

Overall, the Texas ERC complies with the Contract terms, and there were no reportable issues.

### Engagement Team<sup>1</sup>

Paul Douglas, CISA, CCSFP, IT Audit Director, P&N

Jeff D. Bennett, CISA, CISSP, CCSFP, IT Audit Associate Director, P&N

Matt Stewart, CISA, IT Audit Manager, P&N

Madelyne Puyau, CISA, IT Audit Senior, P&N

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<sup>1</sup> This audit project was co-sourced with Postlethwaite & Netterville, APAC (P&N).



## Audit Results

Overall, the Texas ERC complies with Contract terms, and there were no reportable issues. Several information technology (IT) controls were observed, as follows:

- Policies and procedures were created and updated to help ensure confidential information is not removed.
- The IT infrastructure had the necessary controls and procedures to ensure confidential data was limited to authorized users.
- Workstations required multi-factor authentication (username, password, and security token) for users to log in.
- Workstations restricted access to the internet (via Group Policy Objects).

## Background

According to the Texas ERC website, “The Texas ERC is a research center and data clearinghouse providing access to longitudinal, student-level data for scientific inquiry and policymaking purposes. Since its inception in 2006, the Texas ERC’s goal has been to bridge the gap between theory and policy by providing a cooperative research environment for study by both scholars and policy makers. As part of its mission, the Texas ERC works with researchers, practitioners, state and federal agencies, and other policymakers to help inform upon critical issues relating to education today.”

## Scope, Objectives, and Procedures

The scope of this audit included financial transactions during fiscal year 2019, current projects, and current IT security status. The audit objective was to determine whether the Texas ERC is in compliance with the terms of the Contract between UT Austin and the THECB.

To achieve this objective, The Office of Internal Audits (Internal Audits) conducted the following steps:

- Reviewed policies and procedures on operations, research, and security
- Reviewed access and required documentation
- Interviewed relevant staff
- Conducted data security testing
- Conducted limited financial transaction testing

In accordance with the Contract, Internal Audits is required to annually certify that the Texas ERC is in compliance with the Contract terms. In general, the Contract requires the Texas ERC to secure electronic data, restrict and monitor access to electronic data, obtain reviews by the UT Information Security Office and the Texas Department of Information Resources, certify researchers are approved and sign non-disclosure agreements, and submit payments to the THECB for costs necessary to prepare and maintain ERC data.



## Report Distribution

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